Intelligence Role of Military Attaches Lauded

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The director of the Defense Intelligence Agency says U.S. military attaches around the world are "the most cost-effective intelligence collection operation we have in the government today."

The director, Lt. Gen. Daniel O. Graham, also said he expects to have a military attache in Peking by the end of next year. "I don't think the Chinese will mind at all" having him there, Graham said.

Military attaches are among the most visible members of the U.S. intelligence community and their mission is rarely a secret. The Defense Intelligence Agency is the Pentagon's intelligence branch and specializes in military information.

Graham and Maj. Gen. Willis D. Crittenberger Jr., deputy DIA director, testified June 11 before the Defense Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee. A heavily censored transcript of their remarks was released Tuesday.

Crittenberger said there are 88 U.S. military attaches and they have to be high-ranking in order to get intelligence:

"For an attache to be able to gain access to a foreign military regime, he can't be a second lieutenant. He has got to be a flag officer, or a colonel, to talk equally to the foreign people with whom he must deal to bring back the intelligence we need."

Crittenberger said the British have four admirals and generals in Washington and the French have three or four generals while the United States has only one officer that high in their countries, so "we are under strength compared to the others."

"The Russians are the most rank-happy people in the world," Graham said. "The only way I could get a man over there to talk to those generals and marshals and get anything out of them was to get a general officer in there, so we did."

The two DIA generals were testifying to support the agency's request for a $111 million budget for the 15 months beginning July 1. That sum includes $25 million for the attache program. The DIA budget for the 12 months that ended June 30 totaled $80 million, including $18 million for the attache program.